

CHINA BULLETIN

of the

FAR EASTERN OFFICE

Division of Foreign Missions, NCCC/USA

475 Riverside Drive, New York 27

VOL. IX, NO. 17

September 28, 1959

Francis P. Jones, Editor

Wallace C. Merwin, Executive Secretary

AUSTRALIAN FREE CHURCH DELEGATION REPORT

In the August Bulletin we reported on the team of six Australian clergymen who visited Russia and China this summer. They have now issued a statement, signed by the Rev. C. F. Ribble, General Secretary of Methodist Overseas Missions. The sections relevant to China are as follows:

"In China the position must be assessed against the background of recent history, involving the termination of the relationship of Western missions with the Church in China. This has demanded a great effort of readjustment upon the part of the church which has found expression in what is known as "The Three-Self Movement" directed towards the objectives of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation. In the process the church is being required to work out a theology and a polity of her own which aims at the application of all that is good in the Christian heritage to the situation in which the church now finds herself. One thing which the church in China believes to be inimical to her welfare is the perpetuation of denominational divisions.

"A process of dissolving denominational division without loss of distinctive emphases is going on. Whilst churches in Shanghai were obviously well attended it was explained that the major emphasis at present is not upon numerical expansion but upon raising the standard of the church's witness to the community."

Christians in all three countries visited (this includes Czecho-Slovakia) are said to have a deep sense of appreciation of the efforts of the State to improve the lot of the common man. There seems to be genuine conviction upon the part of Christian people that it is possible to be a believing and practicing Christian in a Communist state. It is inevitable that, in a society organized upon the basis of Marxian philosophy, a person of Christian conviction must experience some disadvantage. This, however, is accepted cheerfully as the price to be paid for the privilege of maintaining a Christian witness...."

"It must be admitted that in China there are fewer places of Christian worship than there were prior to 1949. That is in part explained by the fact that the existence of splinter groups was responsible for redundant churches and wasteful competition. These have not been able to survive the demands of the changed situation, and more adequate use is being made of the churches which remain. As the delegation moved among the people in company with national Christians they noticed the respect with which the latter were invariably regarded."

The statement goes on to note the evidences of improving, though still low, standards of living, and of a high degree of discipline and enthusiasm in carrying out the national program,

Issued bi-weekly to keep mission boards and missionaries informed on Christian work in China. Information from Chinese church magazines and other Chinese sources is passed on as objectively as possible, with a minimum of interpretation. When interpretation is necessary, it is enclosed in parentheses as the comment of the editor. ANNUAL RATES: Domestic, \$2.50; Overseas, Firstclass \$4.00, Secondclass \$3.00. Airmail \$5.00 in 15¢ zone, \$7.00 in 25¢ zone.

and ends with expression of the hope that "the barriers to co-operation between these great peoples and the rest of the world may be removed and that each may be able to contribute fully to the welfare of all."

T'EN FENG FOR JULY 6

The July 6 Tien Feng begins with an editorial about food shortage. It reads: "Of late there has been in some places a shortage of auxiliary foods (that is, the vegetables and meat used with rice), not because of decrease in production, but because the increase in production has not kept pace with the increase in consumption. (Is this a rationalization? - If there has been an increase in consumption, how can the condition be called a shortage?) The Central Committee of the Party has held a meeting in Shanghai to deal with this situation, and has laid down as a policy that to meet the need for auxiliary foods in Shanghai there must be a revival of private effort, to be supplemented by help from various organizations such as schools, army units, etc. Now the people everywhere are busy raising pigs and chickens. Many Christians are taking part in this movement, and some of them have had considerable experience, both in communal and in private production. We hope that some of these will write articles for us about their experience."

The next six pages are devoted to a description of the manual work engaged in by various Christian individuals and groups. One article begins as follows: "On the afternoon of June 5, two truckloads of people from religious circles rolled out of Shanghai on the way to Kiating. These 80 persons, of whom 33 were Christians (Protestants), were going out to take part in the summer reaping and planting. We Christians were all assigned to one commune, where we worked together with our farm brothers and sisters for one week. For some of us this was an entirely new experience, and all of us could say that we learned much. We took part in many different activities, such as threshing rapeseed and wheat, planting beans, picking beans, pulling weeds, etc."

The writer goes on to extol the value of unified effort in a commune, and to praise the intelligent direction given by the Party Secretary, who, he says, worked harder than any one else. After working all day in the fields, he would visit one production brigade after another, to discuss with them problems of the work. He tells in particular of one time when, finishing his meeting with the fifth brigade at eleven o'clock at night, he set out to walk several li to visit the fourth brigade and get a report on their day's work.

The writer's chief impression is of the labor involved in production. "We used to think that anything could be bought with money, but now we realize that it is only through labor that things are produced. Labor is something precious which cannot be bought with money. From now on we will respect labor, and the things which it produces."

This is evidently the lesson which the intelligentsia are expected to learn from their labor experiences, and another short article rebukes those who lay the stress on other aspects of their experience. The writer tells of attending a discussion group (they always hold a discussion meeting after every experience, for clarification and criticism), in which the first speaker told how much he learned about farm processes from his work in the country, the next one told how much better his health was since he had spent some time in farm work, and the third one told what a good appetite his farm work had given him. This, the writer says, is all wrong; this is not what they go to the country for. He calls his article, "They Have Forgotten Reform."

An editorial sharpens up this point: Work must be accompanied by constructive thinking, otherwise its value is lost.

The sermons by the two Hungarian bishops while they were in Peking (See previous Bulletin) are given in summary form. Reformed Bishop Bartha Tibor preached on Gal. 3:9, "Those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith." Most of the sermon enforces lessons of loyalty and obedience from the life of Abraham, but he does throw in a criticism of the Western churches which are so bound by capitalist tradition that they oppose the communism and socialism that do so much good for the people. He calls upon his hearers to pray for the Western churches, that they may learn to put service to the people in the first place.

The Lutheran bishop, Zolton Kaldy, preached on John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the

anches." This too for the most part is a straightforward preaching of Christian doctrine, but he also brings in a political touch. He says, "The Hungarian churches did not bear fruit, and so they fell under the judgment of God. They were so closely allied with feudal lords and capitalists that they could not bear fruit." He calls upon Chinese Christians to bear fruit by bearing witness to the gospel, and bringing many people to the Lord.

The argument over Streams in the Desert continues in this issue. It is reported that a discussion group in Shanghai gave a whole session to the question, with some hotly opposing, and others hotly defending the books, while a third group tried to take an intermediate position. A woman writes a warm letter to defend the book. She says, "It startled me to have this question raised. For years I have been reading Streams in the Desert every day; it is as necessary to me as food; now if I must consider it as poison, what shall I do?" In defending the book she says, "I don't know anything about the writers - except this, that they love the Lord."

The debunking of missionary history continues with an article attacking Matthew T. Yates, pioneer Baptist missionary in Shanghai. His importance is recognized in the fact that there used to be a street in Shanghai, Yates Road, named after him. His crimes against the Chinese people are then enumerated, the first one being that when the Little Knife Society, cooperating with the Tai Ping rebellion against the Manchu Dynasty, made a sudden raid and captured the highest official in Shanghai, the Taotai, Yates was instrumental in effecting his escape.

Church news is down to almost zero in this number of Tien Feng. There is one short news item from Nanchang. The Three Self Committee met there for two days, June 15, 16. The chairman, Rev. Hsu Shih-ch'i, made a report on recent patriotic activities of the churches, a new constitution was adopted (with the Three Self Committee now becoming the governing body of the churches, its organization evidently has to be worked out with more care.), and officers elected for the coming year. These consist of Chairmen (Hsu Shih-ch'i), four vice-chairmen, secretary, and a governing committee consisting of the above six persons plus five more. It is further added that religious circles in Nanchang made a good contribution in last year's steel production campaign, and when that campaign came to a close they were reassigned to pig and chicken raising on what had formerly been a public park.

A man from the far west Border Region, in Kweichow Province, writes in a letter to say how well the church is getting along there. He says that the Party treats it well, and that many church members have important positions in society, one even being county magistrate. He closes his letter by saying that before the Communists came he knew only a few dozen characters, but he has learned to read and write during the last nine years.

For Western readers, the most important article in this number of Tien Feng is on "Theologians and the Cold War," a three page article which we review separately.

THEOLOGIAN AND THE COLD WAR

This article in the July 6 Tien Feng is written for the purpose of showing how theologians in the West uphold the imperialist policies of capitalist governments, and in particular of the United States. It begins with the account of an incident which it says took place in North America. A good Christian woman, gathering signatures for the Stockholm Peace Manifesto, approached a theological professor, thinking that surely he would be glad to sign. She is dismayed when he launches into a tirade against the Manifesto, calling it just a piece of Communist propaganda.

Western theologians are accused of glorifying war. A poem by the "religious poet" Paul Claudel is quoted, in which he speaks of the soldiers who are agents of Western imperialism as "angels, soldiers of God." Then a British church periodical is quoted (the periodical is not named), in which an editorial said, "Who says that most of the people in the world fear war and want peace? We have convincing evidence that people are coming more and more to turn against peace. They would welcome the opportunities which another war would bring for a spiritual revival and a renewed sense of direction in life." This statement is criticized on the understanding that it represents the viewpoint of the editor, although the statement itself certainly leaves the question open as to whether the editor is not merely describing a situation which he deplors.

Then the World Council of Churches, described as an American puppet, is quoted on the

question of an atomic bomb. "At the beginning of this year it issued a statement in which it quoted a West German theologian who had said, 'the use of an atomic bomb might well be the political means by which to display Christian love.' How can a 'theological professor' speak of atomic bombs and Christian love in the same breath?"

Paul Tillich is quoted as having said, "For the preservation of certain values, it may not be immoral to use the atomic bomb, even if the whole world is thereby destroyed." The writer says, "What kind of talk is this? This theological professor is certainly much confused in his mind, or he would realize that if the whole world is destroyed, there would be no preservation of certain values." The fact is that this theological professor foresees the end of capitalistic control, and is so enraged at the prospect that he supposes the end of capitalism to be the end of the world.

Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury and a Yugoslav bishop are quoted to the effect that it may be God's plan to destroy the world by the hand of man, as a result of his use of the atomic bomb. The writer comments, "So, the imperialistic use of the atomic bomb does the work of heaven, and the peace movements of the peoples are opposed to the will of God and obstruct His plan. Certainly imperialism will stop at nothing in its use of religion to promote war."

A statement by Nicholas Monserrat is quoted, to the effect that in modern warfare there is no distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and this is interpreted as being an attempt to justify indiscriminate bombing.

Next Billy Graham's five point plan for world peace is ridiculed, and proof of the political overtones of his work is found in the fact that before he visited India he went to the State Department, where he was briefed by Dulles himself, and after his return he made a direct report to Eisenhower.

In America, the writer says, if theological professors and pastors are willing to uphold imperialism and be spokesmen for war, they are given plenty of leeway, and then they mistakenly suppose that America is a country of freedom. But if they are led by their conscience to speak up in behalf of peace, they immediately discover that they have no freedom at all. The Melish case is adduced in proof of this statement, as is also the case of the Cincinnati pastor who refused to pay his income tax.

Whatever statements or movements in behalf of peace are to be found in the West, this writer dismisses as mere camouflage, an attempt to make the church appear as the upholder of peace while really supporting imperialism. "Heaven only knows whether the World Council of Churches really stands for peace or not. If it does, it could readily declare that it favors the co-existence of different social systems and ideologies. But it has never clearly done so. Of course it does speak of peace, but what it says is so confused that no one knows what it means."

An example of this equivocal attitude is alleged in the WCC attitude toward the question of stopping nuclear bomb experimentation. The whole world wants to see this experimentation stopped, and the question is really a very simple one. If you are for it you are for it; if you are against it you are against it; there is no need for cautious hedging. "But the leaders of the WCC find themselves in a dilemma. If they speak out in opposition to the cessation, their imperialist standpoint will be immediately exposed; if they approve, they will give imperialism a blow which they are not willing to inflict; if they say nothing, they will lose an opportunity to gain merit in imperialist eyes, and that would be too bad. And so these great leaders resort to their old trick of approving 'in principle' while at the same time adding all sorts of irrelevant conditions and considerations, such as 'It is more important to stop production than to stop experimentation.' In 1958 the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs put out a statement about nuclear bombs in which they not only did not clearly call for a cessation of experimentation, but went on to say that this question of stopping experimentation is bound up with questions of production, general disarmament, peaceful uses of nuclear power, improvement in the peaceful handling of international disorders, and the possibility of finding a peaceful method of affecting social change." The writer goes on to declare that this hedging is simply a trick to avoid making a clear statement about what is really a very simple matter.

Finally, the writer brings up the question of theological schools, and quotes Dr. H.P. Van Dusen to the effect that the Rockefeller family has been the most generous benefactor of theological education. Since the Rockefeller name is still a potent synonym for capitalism, this statement in itself is sufficient to condemn all Western theological education, including the fund for the improvement of theological schools throughout the whole mission field, as being completely under the domination of capitalist and imperialist designs.

He concludes with the observation that if the future of the world was really in the hands of these evil men, the human race would be in a sorry state. But fortunately the east wind has prevailed over the west wind, and the capitalist West can no longer dictate the future of the world.